

**Lectionary readings: Exodus 20: 1-17; Psalm 19;
Philippians 3: 4b-14; Matthew 21: 33-46**

For reflection and prayer

- **Exodus 20:** Christianity is not a religion of rules, although many people still think of it as a list of 'Thou shalt not...' Jesus summed up the 10 Commandments in two: Love God with every part of your being and love your neighbour as you love yourself. These were given to enable us to live like Jesus, not making our decisions and life-choices out of self-interest, but out of love for God and for others. Our faith is a relationship of love with God who loves us dearly and wants only the best for us. And this must result in a reaching out in love to others, to all, not just those we choose to love.
- **Psalm 19:** There's a line in 'Psalms for Praying' which reads: '*celebrate the dance of life.*' What a lovely invitation! How would you describe life? Then the Psalmist goes on to speak of God's law which he calls the law of Love, which is meant to revive us, to give us wisdom and guidance, to fill us with joy, to enlighten us, to awaken compassion in us. This is not something that restricts our freedom, but sets us free to be the people God created us to be, as we open ourselves up to all the blessings God has already given us. This is a God of love we worship and He wants us to be a loving presence to others as He is to us. May this challenge us all to be loving, compassionate, accepting people.
- **Philippians 3:** Paul had much to be proud of, but he realised all the things he could boast of were of no value compared with knowing Christ. He has one goal only -

to '*embrace Christ and be embraced by Him*' (The Message) which could only result in his becoming more like Jesus. Is this our goal as Christians? Let's reflect this week on what our goal is in life.

- **Matthew 21:** This is a story about God who gave His 'vineyard', the world, over to us to look after. It is interesting how the religious leaders don't see the message as having any relevance for them. They can see that the people who treated the servants and son in an abominable way were a 'rotten bunch'. But when Jesus pointed out that they had failed, instead of humbly acknowledging their need to change, they were angry and wanted to do away with Jesus. Are we any different? Are we prepared to see that we have failed to be all that God wants us to be, and are we willing to change? Are we prepared to give ourselves wholeheartedly to Him and become like Him in love, offering back to God the fruits of His love?

A prayer

Lord, forgive us that we have so misunderstood You. Open our eyes to see You as who You are - a God of infinite love and compassion, who doesn't want to make life difficult for us, but to set us free to become our true selves, serving You and others out of a heart of love. Let us celebrate the dance of life this week with You, our Beloved.

Lord, You are constantly challenging us to grow in our faith and to deepen our relationship with You. Give us the courage and humility to acknowledge our deep need of You and open ourselves to You, to '*embrace Christ and be embraced by Him*' so that we become fully ourselves as You want us to be and reach out to embrace others. Amen.